

Copeland Local Development Framework Working Party Meeting

Minutes of Meeting Held on 3rd August 2011

Present: Councillor G Clements (Chair)
Councillor J Downie
Councillor S Haraldsen
Councillor D Riley
Councillor G Sunderland
Councillor A Norwood
John Hughes - Strategic Planning Manager (JH)
Chris Hoban - Senior Planning Officer (CH)
Alison Earnshaw - Planning Officer – Notes (AE)
Louise Kirkup – Senior Planning Officer (LK)
Chris Bamber – Senior Planning Officer (CB)
Vikki Gregg – Planning Officer (VG)
Keith Parker – Head of Neighbourhoods (KP)

1. **Minutes of the meeting held on 29th June** – Cllr Clements remarked on the fact that a request for training had not been included in the minutes. JH said that despite this omission, he and LK had done some research into what is available from the Planning Advisory Service and it was evident that training modules suitable for this group at this stage of the planning process were not available. Bespoke training would have to be organised. JH to speak to Tim Capper about training and the funding for it as advised by the Chairman.

ACTION: JH

Cllr Sunderland asked about the action for Julie Betteridge in the minutes of the last meeting – to feed back to the Leader of the Council JH's comment that there were no women on the LDF Working Party this year. JB is currently on holiday and so that action will be carried forward.

ACTION: JB

LK said that she had been very pleased with the Whitehaven Town Centre and Harbourside SPD consultation events that had taken place on the 23rd and 28th July in the Pop-up Shop in the Market Place. Local schools had been consulted and in response to this they had sent LK some artwork which was displayed around the room. LK said that their work had made a valuable contribution to the consultation process and invited Members to take a closer look at it. A further event will be held for Councillors and local businesses in the Copeland Centre (Bainbridge Room) at 6.00pm. JH and the Members thanked LK, VG and AE for their work on this consultation event.

2. **Apologies - None**
3. **Declarations of Personal and Prejudicial Interests in Agenda Items – None**
4. **Order of Agenda Items**

Agenda items to be followed as laid out.

5. **Items for which the Press and Public will be Excluded**

No items for which the press and public are excluded.

6. **Strategy for Infrastructure**

CB introduced the document highlighting that it was an evidence base document and the first step towards a developer contributions framework and potential CIL. The document is in draft and will be sent out to infrastructure providers for their comments. It will not be made available to the general public at this time. CB also mentioned the Infrastructure Deficit Plan, completed by his predecessor, Len Cockcroft, and the summary of that document that are available for Members to view.

CB then took Members through some of key parts of the document, i.e. strategy inputs, infrastructure priorities and the feasibility of getting money out of developers. He also pointed out the tables at the back of the document that provide more detail on a series of potential infrastructure developments. (This will be checked over by the infrastructure providers and the numbers will be used to work out what the CIL contributions will be.) CB explained that this strategy document will form the basis of discussions with NuGen. Members were then invited to make comments/ask questions.

Cllr Clements commented that the beginning of section 2 was very negative about growth prospects in the borough and that it was inconsistent with other statements in the Core Strategy document. It was pointed out that section 2 was merely a baseline statement, stating what the prospects for the borough would be if we did nothing. Comments made in the Core Strategy are aspirational. However, CB agreed to revise the wording in section 2.

ACTION: CB

Cllr Riley reiterated the need for Members to be trained in these matters.

Cllr Haraldsen said that he would like to see evidence on the possibilities of raising money from developers. CB said that this would be the next stage of his work.

Cllr Riley asked about the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment and asked if we ever challenged the Environment Agency on this data. JH explained that the problem with the SFRA currently in the evidence base is that it was produced in 2007 and the EA update their flood risk maps every quarter. Cllrs Riley and Sunderland said that we should be challenging the EA on their designation of the land in and around the Kangol site as flood plain – the site has not flooded in 75 years.

Cllr Norwood pointed out that there was no mention of coastal erosion in Mid Copeland. CB said that he would check SMP2 to see if this would be an issue.

ACTION: CB

Questions were raised regarding the section on Green Infrastructure – that Copeland Homes was not mentioned in the document as an owner of open space and that the definition of green infrastructure on page 13 was not the same as that on page 29. CB to amend as discussed.

ACTION: CB

Cllr Clements highlighted that broadband was not mentioned in the document. CB responded that he has already started work on an additional section on broadband and will add it to the document in due course.

Cllr Haraldsen pointed out that it was probably safe to say that 'Building Schools for the Future' was gone as a scheme. CB responded that there was some uncertainty at the County Council and that clarification would be sought.

JH reported that the County Council has been considering the levels of developer contributions it might put forward for its services such as education, libraries and transport. It has produced a draft document on education which has already been shared with local developers before it has been discussed with the Cumbrian District Planning Authorities like Copeland BC. Since it is we that will set and collect contributions through the planning process the County Council should be rehearsing its ideas with us first so that they can be seen as part of a wider picture. Their requirements need to be part of a comprehensive document dealing with a range of matters, not just education. We don't want to overload developers with high levels of charges and a long list of infrastructure needs as this will make their developments unviable. Cllr Haraldsen said that this point needed to be stressed in this Strategy document.

CB reported that it was possible for LPAs to have both S106 and CIL but that S106 could not duplicate what is in CIL. S106 can still be used for issues such as affordable housing which are not infrastructure. Cllr Norwood asked about the costings i.e. what year were they based on? Were they adjusted for inflation? CB responded that the roads data was taken from work by Capita and that the figures were probably not adjusted.

7. Open Space and Playing Pitches

CH provided a verbal update on the Open Space and Playing Pitch Assessment that was completed in April 2011. This has been fed into the Infrastructure Deficit Plan. It provides an assessment of need for different types of green space in different parts of the borough. It sets out a series of standards based on comparisons with national benchmarks. The final part of the study assesses where contributions can be used to improve each type of open space. Maps and summary tables for each member's own locality were passed around the table.

Members asked whether drafts of the assessment had come to members previously. Cllr Norwood was particularly concerned that the methodology and statistical analysis had not been agreed with members. JH and CH responded that it was merely an evidence base document and that there was not really enough time in the LDF schedule to bring all the evidence base work to the Working Party. The methodology used was that prescribed in PPG17 (Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation). It is more important for Members to make policy decisions. All the evidence base material is available for anyone to view on the website. Cllr Norwood asked that all evidence base work is brought to the LDF Working Party in future.

Cllr Haraldsen left the meeting just before 6.30pm.

8. Draft National Policy Framework

This is a 58 page document that will replace the 1000+ pages of national policy that is currently in place. All letters to Chief Planners will be swept away as well. JH confirmed that the Council will be able to choose its own minimum densities and brownfield targets for housing. The basic message of the new document is that the default answer to development is 'yes' and that all development must be sustainable.

The Localism Bill refers to a 'Local Plan' and not to the 'LDF'. Cllr Haraldsen asked if there was a definition for 'neighbourhood' yet. JH responded that this would be locally determined and that this would create some practical difficulties for planners. We have to consider that Neighbourhood Plans may go against the Core Strategy. Cllr Norwood said that the Government would release guidance as problems crop up.

The consultation on the National Planning Framework will run until the 17th October and the County will be coordinating the response for all the Districts in Cumbria. This response will be brought to a future LDF Working Party.

GVA Work

JH gave a short verbal update on another important piece of evidence base – the 'GVA study'. The purpose of this work is to provide forecasting and scenario building for the LDF. It is unlikely that GVA will be able to stick to their deadline for this and therefore it would be a good idea for us to allow them some more time to get this important information to us.

JH suggested two more dates for LDF Working Party meetings that would allow GVA to have two more weeks to complete their work – 1st Sept and an additional meeting in late September. This would allow the completed document to go to the Executive meeting on 25th October and, if a special Full Council meeting were called, then the deadline for approval of the pre-submission draft would be met. Cllr Norwood expressed concern at the idea to call a special Full Council meeting, stating that such arrangements cost the Council £7000-9000 per meeting.

9. Draft Core Strategy

JH introduced a short document – a working draft of the Vision, Strategic Objectives and Strategic Policies from the Core Strategy DPD. With regards to the Strategic Policies 1-4, a lot rests on the projections from Sellafield. Copeland Borough received some bad news earlier in the day about the closure of the MOX plant and the loss of up to 1000 jobs. The latest figures for future employment at Sellafield will now have to be revised down (one week after we received them).

Cllr Clements asked that the heading of the table in Para 2.2.1 be changed from 'We will' to 'We will, with partners'. CH explained that the 'we' in this case was the LSP, but that rephrasing this would probably be advisable.

JH explained that the Vision had been condensed down from 6 statements to 4 – to fit in with the four themes that run right through the Core Strategy document. The Strategic Objectives have been organised in the same way.

Cllr Sutherland pointed out that RSS housing targets are still being quoted in section 3.2. CH said that this would be the case until the updated numbers were received from GVA.

Cllr Norwood said that the statements contained within the vision, objectives and policies could have been written by anyone.

Cllr Riley, commenting on policy ST2 asked if Egremont, Cleator Moor and Millom were considered to be second best to Whitehaven. JH responded that they have a different role to play in the settlement hierarchy. The policy now is to concentrate most development in our largest settlements and a village services survey has been carried out to help inform our choice of Local Service Centres. Cllr Clements said that the Council needs to concentrate on bringing empty homes back into use as the number of demolitions taking place in the borough means that even though new build is taking place, the benefits of this are not as great as they could be.

JH added that it was acknowledged that the text of ST1 is 'fluffy' but that it is essential in the light of the new National Planning Framework – development has to be sustainable.

Cllr Riley asked if the settlement boundaries would be revised. JH responded that they would be and that certain settlement boundaries would be enlarged.

ST3 is based on the Britain's Energy Coast Masterplan and ST4 provides the policy hook for the Strategy for Infrastructure.

Cllr Haraldsen to send his comments on this item to JH.

ACTION: Cllr Haraldsen

Next meeting – 1st September 2011, 5.00pm, Bainbridge Room

The meeting closed at 7.25pm

